DECEMBER 85/JANUARY 86 No 12 60p

BI-MONTHLY

The magazine for bisexuals

PETER TATCHELL ON AIDS

AIDS AND WOMEN • SELF DEFENCE •
COMING OUT • LONDON FILM FESTIVAL
SCOTTISH NEWS • MISHIMA •
NEW RESEARCH • ALICE WALKER'S POETRY

BOOKS

For your area

A group of bisexuals has emerged at EXETER UNIVERSITY and are meeting as part of the GAYSOC there. See Sally's report on page 10 and contact her, or Andy through her.

TYNESIDE BISEXUAL GROUP will hold its first public meeting on Friday 31st January. For further details contact Simon Henderson, 31 Harrison Place, Sandyford, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE2 1DE. Tel 0632-615088.

Growing in membership, BRIGHTON BISEXUAL GROUP is now meeting on the first Tuesday of every month at 8pm at the Brighton Unemployed Centre, Prior House, Tilbury Place, Brighton. Write to that address with a S.A.E. please for further details.

The drop-in evening hosted by LONDON BISEXUAL WOMEN'S GROUP takes place every first Monday of the month at the Drill Hall, 16 Chenies St., London SW1. (nearest tube: GOODGE STREET). For further details telephone Zaidie on 01-249-3825.

Rejuvenated by the recent conference EDINBURGH BISEXUAL GROUP meets every Thursday at 7.30pm at the Lesbian and Gay Community Centre, 58a Broughton St., Edinburgh EH1 3SA. All welcome. For further details write or phone Kate on 031-556-0497. Sorry, no disabled access.

The Radical Lesbian/Gay-Identified Bisexual Network is revising and expanding its contacts list. If you are or want to be on the list send a 50 word outline of your concerns and activities to Pink Dandelion, 27 Graham Avenue, Brighton, E.Sussex or Kate Fearnley, 16 Hart Street, Edinburgh.

For your friends

RELATED ISSUES is BI-MONTHLY's very own classified ad's section. To reply to any advertisement, write direct if a name and address is given OR if a reference number is given put your reply in an envelope and write in pencil BI 12 followed by the reference number. Send this envelope to BM BI, London WC1N 3XX. (Your reply envelope should be stamped.)

I am living in a cottage in Hereford and Hay-on-Wye in Herefordshire. Are there any bisexuals anywhere near? If so, please get in touch. I'm going to need all the sympathetic contact I can get. AL. BI 12:01

If anyone is interested in setting up a Bisexual Group in Hull, contact Wolfgang. BI 12:02

Are there any bisexuals at the University of East Anglia? I'm feeling isolated. BI 12:03

Is anyone interested in setting up a Bisexual Group in Glasgow? If so, please contact GBG, PH7, 340 West Princes Street, Glasgow.

The Older Lesbians and Bisexuals Group is a non-scene group that meet for meals etc. in London SW1. telephone (01) 979-0695 (between 6 - 8pm)

BI-SEXUAL COUPLE in Sussex, male and female would welcome contact with another bisexual couple or singles. Tel. Burgess Hill 44498

Jewish women interested in talking about experiences/making links between being bisexual and being Jewish contact Rachel, PH7, 340 West Princes Street, GLASGOW.

For your address book

Useful Telephone Numbers

GAY SWITCHBOARD		01-837 7324
LESBIAN LINE		01-251 6911
THE TERRENCE HIGGINS TRUST	7-10pm	01-833 2971
GAY LEGAL ADVICE	M-F 7-10pm	01-821 7672
LESBIAN & GAY YOUTH MOVEMENT		01-317 9690

GAY'S THE WORD Bookshop, 66 Marchmont Street, London WCI, which is open Monday to Saturday II-7pm, and Sunday 2-6pm.

THE FEMINIST LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CENTRE works to provide information facilities on subjects of importance to women and the women's movement. They possess many facilities including a newsletter every two months. The library is open to non-subscribers but membership is necessary to borrow books. Subscriptions vary according to income (between £I and £I2). Write to Hungerford House, Victoria Embankment, London WC2 6PA. Tel. OI-930 O7I5

The MEN'S ANTI-SEXIST NEWSLETTER (now hugely improved in quality) exists as a forum for exchange of news, ideas, thoughts, feelings and information for men who are challenging sexism and particularly for people who wish to find for men alternative roles to those which society casts for them.

Single issue by post 80p

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contact M.A.N., 60 Rhymney Street, Cathays, CARDIFF.

SIGMA - a support organisation for the straight partner in relationships where one partner is gay or bisexual. Contact via Gay Switchboard (tel (OI) 837 7324).

LONDON TELEPHONE CONTACTS

The LONDON BISEXUAL GROUP meets every Monday at the Fallen Angel, Islington. (For details see back page.) For advice and information about other activities phone: DAVID BURKLE 01-340 5729
DAVID SMITH 01-359 4463

The LONDON BISEXUAL WOMEN'S GROUP meets regularly in the women's homes. For details phone DIANA 01-223 6895

The BISEXUALS AND MARRIED GAYS GROUP can be contacted through NIGEL. Phone 01-558 5203 (5.30pm to 10pm)

CONTACTS ABROAD

USA: BOSTON BISEXUAL WOMEN'S NETWORK, P.O.Box 1534,
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130, USA.
SAN FRANSISCO BISEXUAL CENTRE, 1757 Hayes St.,
San Fransisco, CA 94117, USA.
CHICAGO BI-WAYS, P.O.Box A333Q, Chicago,
Illinois 60690, USA.
MELIS ALLIANCE, P.O.Box 4755, Philadelphia,
Pennsylvania 19137, USA.
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BISEXUAL GROUP,
Amhurst, MA 01002, USA.
ARETE, P.O.Box 725, Van Nuys, California 91408 USA

GERMANY: INITIATIVE BISEXUELLER FRAUEN UND MANNER
North - Claudia Quintern, Fröbelweg 7,
3400 Göttingen.
Westfalia - Klaus D Hameister, Am Sudholz 58,
4800 Bielefeld 1.
North Rhine & the South - Francis Hüsers, Aachenerstrasse 214, 4050 Mönchengladbach 1.
Rhine-Main-Lahn Area - Erika Köcher, Am Niddatal
31, 6000 Frankfurt 90 and Ellen Svoboda,
Bahnhofstrasse 71, 6300 Giessen.
and H. Bruns-Potthoff, Bleichstrasse 35, 4900
Herford, W.Germany.

HOLLAND: BI-CLUB, P.O.Box 797, 2003 RT Haarlem.

Bi-monthly

The magazine for bisexuals

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Biotic Publications
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London SW2 4UZ
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Dear

You have been receiving BI-MONTHLY the magazine for bisexuals as a complimentary copy six times a year in the past and I hope you have enjoyed reading it.

The magazine was effectively relaunched with issue no 11 under a new editor with the intention to widen the spectrum of topics discussed within the context of sexuality and to increase its print run.

As part of a re-organization of our distribution we are now inviting you to take up a subscription to BI-MONTHLY and I enclose a subscription form for your convenience. BI-MONTHLY will continue to play a role in the debate on the different sexualities and I hope we will continue to have you as one of our readers.

Hoping to hear from you soon.

Yours with kind regards

Andreas Reda (Distribution)

I wish to receive BI-MONTHLY for one year (six issues) starting with issue no ☐ and I enclose cheque/PO payable to LBG.

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THIS ISSUE

BI-MONTHLY the magazine for bisexuals no 12 Dec 85
Editor: David Smith
Production assistance: David Burkle, Richard Harriman, Andreas Reda, Sue Winter
ADVERTISING telephone 01-359 4463 & 674 1328
Biotic Publications: 1 Lycett House, London SW2 4UZ
Published six times a year. Next issue: 31.1.85
Copy Deadline: 2 weeks prior to publication date
Cover Graphics: Lud Boden
Printed by: Clearaprint, Coldharbour Lane, London SW9

NEXT ISSUE

KEN LIVINGSTONE

What are the chances of funding for minority groups after the GLC has gone? Did Ken really say: We are all Bisexual? Does he really mean it? And what did he learn during his recent visit to Cuba?

GAY MEN AS SPIES

Why are gay and bisexual servicemen subjected to torture? Why do they kill or commit suicide rather than be exposed? Do we need a more democratic 'People's Army'?

COUNSELLING FOR BISEXUALS

What sort of phone calls do the London Bisexual Groups receive? How do those involved cope with them and what are the qualities needed for the job?

LATEST RESEARCH

In-depth analysis of the latest research into bisexuality from the U.S. (See page 15)

DAVID SMITH TALKS TO PETER

Peter Tatchell arrived for the interview on his bike, and he spent the first ten minutes telling me how to cycle through London without ever going on a road - along the canal tow-paths. Not what I'd expected from the "dangerous homosexual" red who was hounded to defeat in his electoral campaign in Bermondsey in 1983 by the gutter press. "The Sun is probably the most obnoxious, lying and degrading newspaper in the world" he said. "I still get threatening phone calls, occasional attacks on my flat and earlier this year when AIDS hysteria was at its height, I was nearly knifed and the attackers screamed "All you queers should be killed before you kill us with AIDS." The threats and attacks always increase after some negative hostile coverage in the popular press. I've also had a very sustained series of telephone death threats from the Ulster Volunteer Force in Belfast, presumably because I support Troops Out of Ireland."

He still devotes a lot of time to the Labour Party believing they offer the best hope to lesbians, gays and bisexual men and women. He travels all over the country to talk on Non-nuclear Defence, Green Socialism and Economic Strategy. He makes a meagre living from the royalties on his books THE BATTLE FOR BERMONDSEY and DEMOCRATIC DEFENCE (both published by GMP) and from writing, though he has difficulties in getting some things published. "The TV TIMES objected to printing a letter about AIDS on the grounds that they were a family publication. My reply was: "If you don't start printing advice on safe sex, there won't be any families left." The U.S. safe sex advertising campaign includes TV and radio commercials plus adverts in daily newspapers, magazines and periodicals."

He is very adamant about Safe Sex. "After the by-election in late 83, I suddenly got quite ill as a result of the attacks and the prolonged stress. For several weeks I thought I might have AIDS. It did concentrate the mind. So I took what was then a very rudimentary test. And when the result was negative it made me more determined that I wasn't going to get infected."

The government has recently announced a £6.3m package to combat AIDS. "It is still far too little," says Peter Tatchell, "and there are plenty of gay Tory MPs who, even if it's only a matter of self-interest, ought to be pressing the government to spend more on AIDS research." In fact the £6.3m does not include a single penny for research, nor any money for The Terrence Higgins Trust. "And furthermore, the £2.5m within this package which has been allocated to the NHS will barely be sufficient for the main AIDS hospitals in London, as the number of patients dramatically rises over the next few months. The government's proposed health education campaign will not begin until next Spring - by which time a further 1,600 people will be infected with the virus." Will the £2.5m set aside for the advertising be sufficient? "No! It's hardly adequate for the massive TV, radio and newspaper space which is required. Judging from the sums needed for the GLC's effective 'anti-abolition' advertising campaign, the government should have put closer to £10m into the public health education."

* * *

Although he recognises that puritanism, the family and Victorian morality are in vogue in right-wing political circles and finds it hardly surprising that there are attacks on the gay community like Rugby Council's attempt to institute an employment ban on gays, he doesn't see advocacy of Safe Sex as part of that. "We have decided Safe Sex. They haven't decided it. A gay activist in the States has said that those who regard it as a compromise and a sell-out are living in a fantasy world. Already in the States a lot of the leading lights in the gay community have died. If the rest of us don't modify our lifestyles, the gay political movement will be decapitated and destroyed.

"What is wrong is the emphasis on reducing sexual partners. Personally I never have been into promiscuous sex anyway, but you can get AIDS from a one-off exposure, if you indulge in unsafe sex. The virtue of Safe Sex is that you can have as many sexual partners as you want. And I think those who are so resistant to it are personally deeply trapped in a lot of very conventional ideas that sex has got to be penetrative and coital. Safe Sex opens up equally interesting and varied forms of sexual expression and new areas of eroticism."

Peter Tatchell is just back from the States where he found some very contradictory situations. "In Texas where there is a vocal, right-wing, religious fundamentalist movement, they have recently re-criminalised homosexuality in the wake of AIDS hysteria. However, in California where unlike in Texas there is a visible politically assertive gay community, Reaganites like Governor George Dukemeijan have publically supported AIDS funding and the gay community. The media and press too have shown a much more sympathetic appreciation of the plight of people with AIDS and the discrimination they face. The Los Angeles Times actually sponsored the Gay AIDS Walkathon in July. Even the Reagan government recognises that it's better to spend a bit of money now rather than be complacent and have to spend thousands of millions of dollars in years to come. In 1985 the U.S. government is spending $109 million which is 30 times the amount spent by the British government in the last three years combined."

Thirty-two million pounds a year ought to be spent on research, an AIDS-awareness health campaign, special grants to hospitals and The Terrence Higgins Trust, Britain's main AIDS charity.

TATCHELL

'I'm not in politics for the sake of rhetorical posture, but to remove inequality, injustice and suffering.'

* * *

"At the moment key research establishments at St.Mary's Hospital in Paddington have to depend on gay men and women going around clubs shaking collection tins. The AIDS laboratory for the Middlesex Hospital is a Portakabin stuck on the roof of the STD clinic. The Terrence Higgins Trust is stuck in two tiny shared offices and needs £2 million for a 24 hour AIDS hotline with professional counsellors and an effective advertising campaign targeted specifically at the gay community.

"At current rates of growth there may well be 50,000 people with AIDS by 1995. It has been estimated by trade-unions that it costs £20,000 a year to care for and treat one person with AIDS; that would end up costing the NHS £1,000 million a year or one fifteenth of its entire budget. So quite clearly the government should heed the old proverb: A stitch in time saves nine."

Why did he think that the Californian gay community in particular had been more successful than its British counterpart in pushing for visibility and acceptance, even to the point of achieving a majority of 'out'gay men on the radical City Council of West Hollywood? "Firstly, because lesbians and gay men by and large work together as part of a unified movement, and they also very closely cooperate with feminists and the women's liberation movement. Obviously unity is strength. The more united a movement is and the broader its political alliances, the greater clout it will have. In West Hollywood there's an extraordinary alliance of gay, Jewish, tenant and pensioner organisations. And the second reason is that although the U.S. gay movement has its principles, it's also very practical and realistic. At the end of the day they tend to be more inclined to accept some reforms rather than no reforms at all. It's a more pragmatic than purist movement.

How had he reacted to bisexuals and other groups being banned from the London Lesbian and Gay Centre?

"I thought it was ridiculous. Gay sectarianism. I'm not in politics for the sake of rhetorical political posture or gaining morality points, but to try to remove the inequality, injustice and suffering.

To me bisexuality is not a political statement, it's a fact of life. And actually I think the ultimate aim of gay liberation is to establish a universal bisexuality, a universal capacity to explore both the heterosexual and homosexual dimensions of their personality. That's what we were brought up to believe in the Gay Liberation Front years ago."

Why did he think that 67% of the population (to judge by a recent Gallup poll) disapprove of bisexuality, when 80% were in favour of gay rights?

"A lot of it is jealousy, and people fear that if they accept bisexuality, they are implicitly accepting that everyone has the potential in them. That cuts a bit too close to home for people who don't want to admit their own homosexual potential."

But how did that account for many gay people being anti-bisexual?

"There are some people who claim to be bisexual who are actually afraid of the fact that they are gay and just use bisexuality as a convenient fig-leaf. That's a cop out and I find it really offensive as well. But I don't therefore label all bisexual people with that tag."

I thought there was an inherent contradiction there. Why should bisexuals proclaim their bisexuality, thinking it less of a stigma when in actual fact it seems to be disapproved of even more strongly than gayness? But he wasn't able to explain that. So we moved on to other things.

Had any progress been made towards a lesbian and gay community programme on Channel 4? "Yes. I'm told that the whole issue of gay programming is under 'active and serious consideration'. Jeremy Isaacs actually said in a letter that if the financing can be worked out, they hope to be able to start a programme in 1987. But there's no cast iron guarantee. The pressure has to be kept up.

"TV is the medium par excellence for getting to isolated gay men and women and a mass audience. And the important thing is that it should be by and for the lesbian and gay community with an open access slot available to lesbian and gay groups to make their own 10 – 15 minute mini programmes under their own editorial control."

In the course of the conversation we had been eating an excellent non-vegetarian meal. We got on to the subject of diet and inexorably back to AIDS. One of the first symptoms is dramatic weight loss. So anyone with the syndrome is advised to eat well and keep fit. "The sad thing is that there are thousands of people who are HTLV-3 antibody positive and if they knew, they could start shifting to a regime of building psychological and physical strength to fight off the disease." One psychological therapy used in the U.S. – and apparently successful – is imagining your depleted T-cells breeding like little white rabbits. There have been some amazing recoveries from some of the diseases associated with acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

And on that hopeful note he cycled off to the gym, leaving me to worry about my own state of health and to admire his energy and the realistic pragmatism which inspires all of his efforts.

World's first Gay Charter

On Wednesday 9th October London became the world's first capital city to adopt a charter for lesbian and gay rights. CHANGING THE WORLD was produced by the Greater London Council in co-operation with the GLC's Gay Working Party, a group of individuals and representatives of lesbian, gay and bisexual groups.

The Charter sees discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation as a human rights issue, which the GLC under Ken Livingstone has tried to bring to the fore. 'I hope it will be discussed and debated throughout Britain,' said Ken, 'because its strength is that it has been produced not by Council officers but by ordinary Londoners united in the struggle to end the discrimination they face every day of their lives.'

To facilitate the discussion the Charter is available on tape, in Braille and in several different languages and is being distributed to thousands of national and local government departments, police, health and education authorities, trade unions and libraries. And the GLC has relinquished copyright on the text so that it can be reprinted and re-used at will after the demise of the Council.

The Charter lists the detailed changes that are needed to end discrimination in employment, education, social services and housing. The media, the police, the courts and prison are all dealt with, as are the special needs of lesbians, older people, the young and the disabled. The 142 recommendations range from: 'The partners of gay prisoners should be allowed the same visiting rights (and associated financial benefits) as the spouses of heterosexual prisoners.' to 'A parent's sexuality or non-heterosexual lifestyle should not automatically affect the outcome in custody cases.'

LBG's involvement in the Charter came late in the day and the original draft contained no reference to bisexuality. But the following passages, written by Catherine Mullan and David Burkle, were added to the final version.

'Heterosexism pressurises most bisexuals into being secretive about their sexuality. They are largely 'invisible' because of the way the words 'lesbian', 'gay' and 'homosexual' have been used to describe exclusive behaviour and orientation.'

'The complexity of the creation and expression of sexuality and sexual orientation is increasingly widely recognised as a challenge to the myth that people are simply born either heterosexual or gay. Lesbians and bisexual women in particular emphasise the element of choice that can be involved. Bisexuals are people who are oriented towards emotional and sexual relationships with people of both sexes. Because of the prevailing heterosexist ideas about sexuality they believe it is important to be politically active within the lesbian and gay movement, working towards an acceptance of a wider range of emotional and sexual relationships for everybody.'

'Throughout this charter the use of the use of the words 'lesbian', 'gay' and 'homosexual' shall include those who choose to define themselves as bisexual and anyone who chooses to express or acknowledge the homosexual part of themselves.'

'This Council/Authority believes that ending discrimination against lesbians and gay men will benefit heterosexuals too. The institution of heterosexuality supports sexism in that it maintains rigid sex role stereotypes which are limiting for both sexes. Fear of being labelled as not-a-real-man or not-a-real-woman, or as gay, can cut people off from being in touch with and lead to their repressing emotional feelings towards people of their own sex (as well as sexual feelings).'

The charter is available from The Book Shop, County Hall, London.

NALGAY opens up bisexuality debate

Last year a bisexual woman who is a social-worker was told that bisexuals were not welcome at the national conference of NALGAY, the lesbian and gay group of the National and Local Government Officer's union, NALGO. However at this October's NALGAY conference there was a workshop on bisexuality which concluded that 'traditional labelling in terms of sexuality was restrictive and forced people into moulds that didn't always fit.'

The four men and five women discussed definitions of bisexuality weighing up the relative importance of sexual and emotional elements, and even quoting a phrase from BI-MONTHLY – 'loving individuals as individuals'. Various theories of how and why people come to be bisexual were also reviewed. 'Are we all on a continuum from total homosexuality to total heterosexuality, with bisexuals stuck happily or unhappily in the middle?' Do you have to be in the middle to be bisexual? 'Are we all born bisexual and flee into one stereotype or another? Or is our sexuality defined at birth and unalterable?'

The group also discussed some of the problems involved in coming to terms with bisexuality. Some men talked of reconciling being married with being gay and some complained of discrimination from within the lesbian and gay rights movement. Others resented accusations of wanting the best of both worlds.

In the light of last year's decision to exclude bisexual people, the workshop came to a very interesting conclusion. It was pointed out that bisexuals who choose to work for lesbian and gay rights do so because it is the homosexual area of their lives in which they feel most oppressed. And this led to a discussion of whether the conference should have welcomed people who could not necessarily define themselves as lesbian and gay but who wanted to understand and fight heterosexism.

Young people needed for video

Production has started on a series of 20-minute videos designed to stimulate discussion on homosexuality in classrooms and at youth groups. They will be available nationally next year.

In the first, lesbian and gay teenagers will talk about their personal experiences of discovering their sexuality and of coming out at home and school, and some of their friends will talk about their reactions.

In the second, the same people will focus on political issues: why things are as they are and how they can be changed at school and elsewhere.

It is planned to look at other related topics in further ten-minute slots: bisexuality; gay fathers and lesbian mothers; and 'out' gay teachers.

The production team is looking for teenagers (up to 21!) who think of themselves as bisexual and are willing to be interviewed. If you are, or know of someone in this position, get in touch with David Burkle of LBG. Interviews will begin in January.

Edinburgh conference success

Illustration - Lud Boden

Women predominate

Bisexuality and The Politics of Sex - a conference weekend of theory, sexual politics and exchanges of personal experiences confirmed 1985 as a year of progress for the bisexual community in Britain.

After discussion and organisational meetings at the conference, the number of individual bisexual groups has now reached double figures.

The conference, held in Edinburgh on October 19 and 20, was the third in a continuing series of six monthly meetings and the first conference ever on bisexuality to be held in Scotland. After the first two gatherings in London, it was decided that the growing bisexual movement should expand out into the rest of Britain.

This has proved to be a good policy for the Edinburgh Bisexual Group with 28 of the 52 people attending coming from the city itself. And the effects of the conference have also filtered back over the border into England with the establishment of a Tyneside Bisexual Group.

The sharing of personal experiences was an important part of the weekend. Many of those attending are isolated from other bisexual people and often can not even talk about bisexuality to their lesbian and gay friends.

As Rachel from Glasgow said: 'This is the first time I have come across a group of people with whom I can share my life without having to censor the homosexuality bit or the heterosexuality bit.'

A hallmark of the conference was the predominance of women - almost three quarters. This facilitated a very frank discussion in a mixed workshop on A.I.D.S. It was felt that the implications for women had hardly been touched on in the media, since the most serious coverage came from the gay press and was aimed at gay men. And now bisexuals are increasingly being cast in the role of transmitters of AIDS to the heterosexual population.

Very little was censored during the weekend. People spoke graphically and honestly about sex, lovers, relationships, marriage, and children. New ideas were expounded. Women and men talked of giving up penetrative intercourse and how this was just a small part of a search for relationships where power and privilege are not abused.

Women and men talked of long periods of celibacy. People talked of how A.I.D.S. and the concept of Safer Sex are leading to greater value being put onto other aspects of relationships and better communication.

Others condemned the proscriptive morality underlying the restrictions we are urged to impose on our sexuality, linking this with a condemnation of sadomasochism, tranvestism and other elements of the sexual fringe to which bisexuality is so often banished.

It was a lively weekend with firm foundations being laid for a more active and more effective bisexual movement.

The next conference will be in London in the Spring.

National survey of lesbian sexuality

CONTACT Magazine is conducting a national survey of lesbian sexuality. The lesbian news and reviews magazine has printed the two-page questionnaire in its October/November issue and distributed 2,000 more copies to groups. Forty questions cover sexuality, coming out, motherhood and reading habits, and also touch on drink, drugs, suicide and counselling. To begin, women are asked: Which of the following best describes your sexuality? Lesbian...Bisexual ...Celibate...Undefined... Copies of the questions are available from CONTACT, 11A, Forth St., Edinburgh or from London Bisexual Women's Group (Survey), BM BI, London WC1N 3XX. Closing date 31st Dec.

GAY SCOTLAND magazine to feature bisexuality

GAY SCOTLAND, the glossy lesbian and gay magazine produced in Edinburgh is to carry a major feature on bisexuality in the Spring. It is eagerly awaited, as many of the writers for GS are bisexual. The magazine, the best of its kind in the U.K., is soon to be relaunched on the national market.

Edinburgh Bisexual Group meets weekly

Rejuvenated by the recent conference EDINBURGH BISEXUAL GROUP meets every Thursday at 7.30pm at the Lesbian and Gay Community Centre, 58a Broughton St., EH1 3SA. All welcome. For further information write or phone Kate 556-0497. Sorry, no disabled access.

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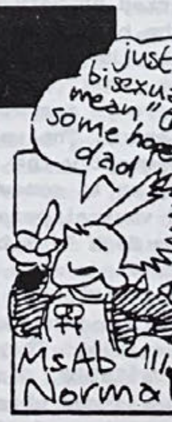
just cos I'm bisexual doesn't mean "there's some hope for me" dad
MsAb Normal
Lud Boden '85

AIDS Facts and Safer Sex for women and men

'We believe that HTLV3 infection and AIDS present the most important infectious disease public health problem in the U.K. for many decades.' This is the opinion of Dr. Marion McEvoy, the AIDS Data Collector at the Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre in Colindale.

The estimated number of people infected with the HTLV3/LAV virus is as high as 20,000. The vast majority will be gay and bisexual men. Lack of reliable statistics on bisexuality make it difficult to judge how many women are likely to be at risk of infection through sex with bisexual men, but in 1983 at the Sexually Transmitted Diseases Clinic at St. Mary's Hospital in Paddington 13% of the gay men being tested had had sex with a woman within the previous six months.

Around 4% of the 13,000 AIDS cases in the U.S. are women. Slightly over half of these are intravenous drug users who probably acquired the virus from blood in shared hypodermic syringes.

There have been 130 cases of heterosexually transmitted infection in the U.S. of which only thirteen involved a woman passing the virus to a man during intercourse. In Britain only two women are classified as having contracted the virus through heterosexual contact, but seven others 'directly or indirectly connected with sub-Saharan Africa' may well have picked up the virus in this way. There have also been four cases of AIDS in women in Australia which were a result of Artificial Insemination by Donor, but all sperm banks are now being screened for the virus, in the same way as blood, plasma and breast milk stocks are being checked and heat treated.

The virus has been found in blood, semen, saliva, tears and breast-milk, and other bodily fluids may well present some danger of infection. However blood and semen have a much higher concentration of viruses and should be treated with caution. So far vaginal fluid has not been shown to contain the virus, but as with saliva the blood present in the fluid is the significant factor. Menses, containing as it does broken down blood vessels, must be considered as possibly containing the virus.

In this country anal sex is by no means restricted to gay men. But in the Third World it is much more common among heterosexuals, as a method of birth control or in countries like Brazil as a way for men to prove that they have really had a woman.

There is an enormous danger of causing panic by quoting so many figures and possibilities. The HTLV3 virus is not picked up very easily. It has to enter directly into the bloodstream. This is illustrated by anal intercourse, the riskiest part of sex. The lining of the rectum is easily damaged thus providing easy access for viruses in sperm. The viruses actively seek out a point of entry. The walls of the vagina are very tough, and consequently the risk of infection during vaginal intercourse is somewhat reduced.

Both anal and vaginal penetration by a penis are considered to be High Risk by the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT), Britain's main AIDS charity. They have produced detailed SAFER SEX guidelines which classify twenty six different forms of sex in Low, Medium, High and No Risk categories. They are the most explicit and comprehensive available, despite the surprising omission of cunnilingus which must be considered to be at least medium risk, and if there is any blood present then it might well be a high risk activity.

Sex between exclusive lesbians might reasonably be assumed to be safe, as might sex in any mutually monogamous relationship. But how many of us really know every detail of our partners' sex lives?

Since a cure or a vaccine may be years away, Safer Sex has been adopted as a means of containing the virus and protecting each other. The philosophy behind Safer Sex is that everyone who might be at risk from contact with high risk groups should assume that she or he is carrying the virus and should act accordingly to avoid affecting anyone else.

There is controversy over the effectiveness of condoms as a barrier. The Haemophilia Society feels that using a condom makes vaginal intercourse Low Risk. The THT is more cautious however, suggesting that anal and vaginal intercourse MAY be safer with a sheath. Some people claim that as many as one in four is defective in one way or another; others claim to have had not a single one puncture or come off in years - even during anal intercourse.

An investigation into the effectiveness and use of condoms is being carried out by the DHSS and the subject crops up much more in conversation these days. I've had tips about extra strong ones from the U.S. and ones with no teat from France. (There's less chance of the end getting stuck and the whole thing coming off.) But then there's the smell that lingers everywhere. It's disgusting. And is anyone going to suck a cock through a Durex? That has been seriously suggested.

Plain cock-sucking is considered to be Medium Risk. The THT feel that:'Not coming in the mouth may be safer than coming in the mouth, but both are Medium Risk, because there is always some leaking of fluid before orgasm. Swallowing semen is not likely to increase the risk further.' Though I do wonder why spitting it out wouldn't reduce the concentration of viruses likely to be seeking a break in the gums.

Other Medium Risk activities are: wet kissing; penis to body contact between the thighs or buttocks; fist fucking; fingering or licking the anus (rimming); douches and enemas; urination (water sports, golden showers etc.) as long as the urine does not enter the mouth, anus or eyes; using sex toys which are shared with other people.

All of that seems very clinical and off-putting, but the THT has also just produced a booklet about how to make Safer Sex more exciting. This is probably the biggest challenge.

Further advice for women in any of the High Risk groups is not to get pregnant, or at least to take the test for the antibodies to the virus before trying to have a child. The test can be arranged through an STD clinic or through your doctor and will tell you whether you have been in contact with the virus. It is not 100% accurate however.

Pregnancy depresses the immune system and is likely to provoke full-blown AIDS in women with the virus, and it is almost certain that the child will contract the disease as well, either through the placenta or from breast milk.

At least thirty infants under the age of four in the U.S. have been diagnosed as having AIDS or something similar. Most of these were born to mothers with AIDS or mothers in high risk groups or they had received blood transfusions.

For further information contact the Terrence Higgins Trust, BM AIDS, LONDON WC1N 3XX. Tel: 01-833 2971 eves.

The lesson to be learnt from Africa

By October 25th 1985, there had been 231 cases of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) reported in the UK, 134 of these having died. Of these cases, the vast majority (89%) were gay and bisexual men. Only **ten** cases were women. Seven of these women were directly or indirectly "associated with sub-Saharan Africa", one was the recipient of whole blood and the remaining two had been infected via heterosexual contact.

One should not therefore be surprised that the population, the media, the government and a large section of the medical profession have concluded in the light of this information that AIDS is a **male** problem, specifically a **gay male** problem and that the impact on women is negligible. Such an attitude is not necessarily misleading but I believe irresponsible nonetheless. I would suggest that this dangerous misconception is a result of many factors, not the least of which is the profoundly ethnocentric ignorance of the situation in tropical Africa.

It is all too easy for some people to assume that the situation in Africa bears no relation to AIDS here - after all Africa is a **long way away**. On the contrary, it is surely such an attitude that is responsible for the appalling length of time it took for AIDS to be spotted and investigated when it finally emerged in the United States. It is generally accepted that HTLV-3 has been present in tropical Africa for at least 10 years, perhaps as long as 14. It also appears that it spread from Africa to the United States (via Haiti?) in the late 70's or 1980. The first case of AIDS in the States was reported in early 1981 soon followed by the first case in the UK in December 1981. There is little doubt that the USA is 'ahead' of the UK in the development of AIDS - the number of cases as a proportion of the population being around 15 times higher in the States. I would like to suggest that the situation in Africa at present gives some indication of the situation in the USA (and hence here) in the future.

The situation in Africa is different in one major respect. The sex difference is much less apparent. As reported in The Lancet earlier this year, and mentioned in the recent **Weekend World** programme the countries of Rwanda and Zaire have reached the point where almost as many women as men are infected. The immediate assumption one is lead to make is that in Africa HTLV-3 can be transmitted heterosexually. One does have to proceed with caution however. There have been several suggestions that discount heterosexual transmission. These have highlighted a variety of possible non-sexual reasons including the possible blood transmission during ritual scarring, transfer of blood by mosquitoes and (scarcely mentioned) heterosexual anal sex as a contraceptive technique. However, none have received any empirical support. As a consequence one has to conclude that in Africa at least, **AIDS can be transmitted heterosexually.** The implications for the Western world are critical.

In a report in The Lancet recently by Robin Weiss and Angus Dalgleish (amongst others) a new disorder is described. It is found in certain areas of Uganda and is strongly thought to result from HTLV-3 infection. Known colloquially as 'Slim Disease' because the predominant symptom is severe weight loss, the crucial difference between this and AIDS as we known it is that Slim Disease is transmissable **heterosexually** as well as **homosexually.** This study is particularly impressive as the researchers have discounted the possibility of transmission via cultural factors such as blood-letting and ritual scarring (but not anal sex).

Another study, nearer to home and perhaps more frightening was conducted in Italy and considered the partners of HTLV-3 positive patients and concluded that:

> "there is a 50% or greater chance of a healthy individual being infected by HTLV-III if he or she is the partner of a HTLV-III positive, at risk subject..."

In the light of these findings (if one believes them) - that AIDS can be spread heterosexually - one is forced to accept that AIDS is not just a problem faced by gay and bisexual men but by the female partners of such men also. It is not often that one reaches a conclusion similar to that of the more sensationalist sections of the press - that AIDS can be spread to the 'normal population' but again I suggest that it is irresponsible not to consider the implications of this data.

RICHARD HARRIMAN

Understanding the facts

UNDERSTANDING AIDS:
A Comprehensive Guide, edited by Victor Gong MD, Cambridge University Press, 240pp, h-b, £17.95.

'The central reality, and by far the most traumatic effect at this time, is that the lives of thousands of young men in their prime are being snuffed out because of AIDS. This fact alone demands understanding and compassion from us all. Simplistic solutions and the reactions of religious extremists have no place in dealing with this serious and complicated medical situation.'

This book is like a message from the future. It presents research already carried out. It talks of intensive education and information programmes which have already been successful in calming unfounded hysteria. It lists health-care centres and support groups for people with AIDS. But they are all in America where the book was compiled. And this only highlights how ill prepared we are in Britain.

Nevertheless UNDERSTANDING AIDS is an essential handbook for doctors and medical personnel, health-care workers and everyone who is or is likely to be personally affected by the disease.

The research was up to date in February 85. There are detailed articles on the epidemiology, immunology and etiology of AIDS. How it spreads, what it does to you and how it does it. This is a medical textbook, but written with the lay reader very much in mind. It even answers the most obvious question: What is a virus?

Rigourous attention is given to the signs and symptoms, the cancers and the various viral, parasitic, bacterial and fungal infections. Attempts at treatment include the use of interferon, bone marrow transplants, drugs affecting T-cells, stress reduction, acupuncture, improved nutrition and oriental herbs.

There is detailed practical guidance on hygiene for people with AIDS and for those caring for them, and consideration is given to the complicated psychological reactions to the disease and to death.

Like so much literature on AIDS however, this book only coyly refers to the mechanics of Safe Sex, even though this is identified as a major strategy for containing the disease, pending the discovery of a cure, which could take years.

Nevertheless it's a fascinating, groundbreaking book. Tell your doctor and your library to order it.
DAVID SMITH

COMING OUT

'I still feel I cannot tell everyone about myself.'

I am a twenty-two year old bisexual woman with two young children. If I tell my story maybe one of your readers could give me some advice, for I know there must be more people like me.

At the age of 11 or 12 I was seen kissing a 14 year old school friend. After that I was always picked on for being gay. After I started dating boys at 16, some of the name-calling stopped.

At 17 I started going out with the leader of the local motorbike gang of which I was a part - along with a young woman to whom I had very strong feelings.

I soon fell for my first child and married. Sixteen months later, expecting my second, we split up and divorced. Only later I found out that the young woman was gay and that was when I could no longer contact her. I knew by then that I couldn't go on pretending much longer.

A year or so later I found a small ad in the local paper giving a number to ring, if you needed to talk to someone about being gay. After two weeks when I had the nerve I rang up.

I had a relationship with a young woman, but she thought that you had to be gay or straight but couldn't be bi.

Since then I have had a relationship with a bisexual woman but I still feel I can not tell everyone about myself. I met a young woman the other week in hospital. She was a patient (like me) but also a nurse. I had plenty of time to get to know her and she is totally against gays. I found her very attractive but how can I tell her? How do I not tell her? I find a lot of times I meet people I just can't tell and it makes me confused.

I may not have told this very well but I'm sure there are lots of people nodding their heads and saying, Yes I know how you feel. If there is, please get in touch. Maybe we can help each other. I need to get rid of my feelings of despair and isolation.

Desperate, Della Rushforth, South Humberside. (Letters will be sent on by LBG, BM BI, LONDON WC1N 3XX)

and my girlfriends
Me
1948
Whitby

200 discuss bisexuality at university

Inspired by my first visit to the Fallen Angel this summer, I went back to Exeter University determined to break the 'Bi Taboo'. I received mildly surprised encouragement and tentative interest from Gay Soc who gave a position to BI-MONTHLY on their stall and organised an open meeting.

Two hundred students attended to hear four gay people express both the positives and negatives of coming out and staying out.

This was an opportunity to open up discussion on bisexuality during question time. I confess it would not have been so easy to stand up and speak had it not been clear that the general atmosphere was largely sympathetic. I also noted that probably every person at the meeting had a different position on the broad spectrum of sexuality.

I took a deep breath and approached the microphone. I hope I adequately voiced the neglect of the bisexual phenomenon and rejected the polarised labels which my gay friends implied when talking about homophobia.

I stressed my strong empathy for gay people and admitted with regret that it had been easier in the past to enjoy heterosexual privilege. I hoped that by openly declaring my bisexuality I would be exposing myself to all that gay students face on campus.

After my speech the Women's Officer stood up and echoed my feelings in a very moving and personal way. She hoped to form a discussion group.

I have to say it was probably the most frightening thing I have ever done. I suffered from paranoid delusions afterwards, that I was being stared at with everything from disgust to incredulity.

A special bisexuality evening followed attended by fifty women and men . We covered an enormous range of topics with emotional fervour. However my impression was that very few were prepared to openly identify as bisexual. Two professed straight men referred to homosexual experiences as only part of their adolescence. Several women and men implied that they were not shutting off the possibility of same sex relationships, even if they were not actively pursuing them.

A number of my gay friends who attended, admitted occasional attraction to the opposite sex. This appeared to worry them. They empasised that a more clear cut position gave them a position 'from which to fight', and that they couldn't handle the confusion of bisexuality. Bisexuals amongst us tried to argue that you don't necessarily need a specific label to be strong. I couldn't help feeling that in categorising ourselves and having such groups we were admitting our own underlying fallibility, the need to belong and be accepted.

A week later a S/HE meeting (The University's Antisexist Society) had a general discussion on 'attitudes to sexuality', but far fewer people attended; and only four men. I began to get worried that we could 'overdo' the sexuality debate and, that possibly meetings should be more spread out.

Having made an issue of my own sexuality in public I confess I was also afraid of it taking over, since my commitment to my degree and involvement in the peace movement and local voluntary work were equally strong important parts of me.

I was pleased however that at last I was hearing the word bisexual in everyday conversation. I was not sure though whether to be happy when a bloke came up to me on campus and told me that he had been to a party the evening of the Gay Soc meeting and all the men were coming out as bi. I felt

Three very different viewpoints from three very different women . . .

as if I'd started some trendy epidemic, rather than anything permanent and meaningful - a tendency amongst young people I feel.

From a selfish point of view I gained a lot from hearing women and men echo the feelings I had surpressed for a long time. I felt great pride and relief that declaring my sexuality had made no difference in my relationships with friends. They have stood by me unquestioningly.

The women I live with have coped well with homophobic suggestions that they should 'lock their doors at night'. Such jokes stab hard but at least I began to, more than intellectually, understand the biting prejudices that gay people have to put up with daily.

Exeter bisexual students are now at last creeping out of their heterosexual hideaways, but it does take time. Presently we are not actually going to start a specific Bi Soc, believing that meetings with Gay Soc and S/HE are providing adequate forum for discussion.

However if anyone is feeling isolated in the West County. do feel free to ring me on Exeter 51861 (evenings only). Regular discussion groups will be difficult to organize. but several bisexual women and men go to 'Boxes' on Tuesday night for the gay disco.
SALLY KNOCKER, 12 Danes Rd, Exeter.

'Your friends are waiting for you to say something.'

On Monday 14th October, Stephanie Norris talked to the London Bisexual Group about her book OUT IN THE OPEN: PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT BEING GAY OR BISEXUAL, of which she is co-compiler with Emma Read. The book, published by PAN at £2.50, has been widely available in high street bookshops and has sold almost 20,000 copies.

The discussion with Stephanie Norris revolved very much around 'coming out' - telling your family, friends etc. about your bisexuality/gayness. Afterwards David Smith asked her why she thought it was such an important step to take.

"I think coming out is terribly important, not only for lesbian, gay or bisexual people as individuals but also because, unless we come out as who and what we are, unless we show that we are not ashamed of our sexuality, that there's nothing to hide, unless we do that, the heterosexual majority is going to assume that our sexuality is something not to be talked about. I think they take their cue very much from us. If you are confident about who you are and what you are, if you are relaxed about it, then other people will think: Oh well, it must be alright.'

Did she think that people build up fear of coming out out of all proportion?

"I think they do. I think it's very understandable. I think you can be so frightened of getting a hostile or homophobic reaction that you may feel that you may run a risk of losing your job by coming out. And from my own personal experience and the personal experiences of other lesbian, gay or bisexual people I know, the more common reaction is quite frankly, "Well so what? Fine! I always thought you were anyway. It's great. I always knew!" It brings you closer together. As somebody was saying tonight, there is a barrier. People sense that you're not quite like them, but they can't put their finger on it. And you don't say anything. They're waiting for you to say something. They can't say you're bisexual or gay for you. You have to say it. And very often they're relieved when you say it because it breaks down the invisible barrier."

. . . and a man's view from the Labour and Tory party conferences

The most striking thing about a visit to the Tory and Labour Party conferences is the different attitudes of gays and lesbians at these events. Labour gays are open and activist; the Conservative gays are older and are generally unwilling to see themselves as activists.

The motion pledging action on lesbian and gay rights by the next Labour government, which was passed by a significant majority, has been well covered by the gay press, however I would like here to give some background as to how this was achieved.

The Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (LCLGR) was to the fore in lobbying trade unions and constituency delegates to pass the motion. LCLGR was able to forge a strong coalition with other groups by pledging to support measures which they were campaigning for - such as the Campaign for Black Sections and the Labour Women's Action Committee (WAC), whom one might describe as militant feminists.

The efforts of these groups involved long, long caucus meetings in bars and smoke-filled rooms, deciding strategy and tactics such as whether it was best for the mover of the gay rights motion to be male or female, gay or lesbian and whether it should be an MP or an ordinary 'punter'. Although this might sound trivial, in fact it was crucial, as the wrong kind of speech or the wrong kind of motion might drive away millions of trade union block votes or antagonise the Labour leadership which wanted the motion 'remitted back' - in other words shunted into a siding.

In the end the lobbying and caucusing paid off and the motion got through. There were also well attended fringe meetings by the Terrence Higgins Trust and the LCLGR. (Contact address: Chris Smith MP, FREEPOST House of Commons, London SW1)

The Conservative conference by contrast was a rather sad affair. A fringe meeting by the Conservative Campaign for Homosexual Equality was very poorly attended by a mostly older audience. However the odd thing was that there appear to be more gay men in the Tory Party than anywhere else. I actually spoke to six Conservative councillors - all gay but unaware of each other's existence in different parts of the country.

The message for all of us is that getting involved and active is the key to a more enlightened attitude. By the way, before anyone writes in, there is still a long way to go on the question of bisexual rights, and I wasn't able to go to the Liberal conference - it was in Dundee.

MISHIMA

bisexual figurehead or sadistic fascist?

MISHIMA, the latest film from Paul Schrader, has recently focused attention on Yukio Mishima who committed seppuku, ritual suicide in the Samurai tradition, fifteen years ago, after his attempted coup in Japan was met by derision from the assembled army.

A narrow reading of his semi-autobiographical early novel CONFESSIONS OF A MASK by gay writers has led to Mishima being hailed and admired uncritically as a gay/bisexual hero - not least for his narcissistic photographs which adorn gay magazines.

The film, widely acclaimed as beautiful, intelligent and even triumphant, makes only oblique references to Mishima's bisexuality and doesn't even hint at the death pact he had made with the soldier who died with him.

What is more disturbing in this 'fictionalised' account is the lack of any real analysis of Mishima's fascism. I found the screen persona mildly ridiculous, not at all dangerous; and yet Mishima had his own private army which trained with regular forces in Japan, he had the ear of top army personnel and he argued strongly that Japan should acquire a nuclear arsenal. He embraced the Samurai tradition and Emperor worship and wanted to reinstate its principles.

Today in Japan a one time friend of Mishima now Prime Minister has been rehabilitating the memory of some of the soldiers whose Samurai ethic led to some of the excesses of World War Two. A disturbing trend?

In the extracts below (taken from a much longer essay charting Mishima's connection with the Marquis de Sade) we look at Mishima and sadism.

DAVID SMITH

Mishima's fantastic ideal, like that of de Sade, was based on submission and penetration. Yet, on closer examination, the penetrating object is never the phallus; the object of desire, though almost constantly male, is never the penis or the anus. Resistance becomes the sexual lubricant. The erogenous zone becomes taut muscular skin, the warm spurting fluid is blood, the weapon is the sword, lance or arrow. Mishima wished to marry flesh and steel striving towards anti-creation - death. His bed becomes a dissecting table.

The main difference between Mishima and de Sade is that whilst the latter was a post Industrial/French Revolution sadist the former could be termed a post Hiroshima/Nagasaki sadist. This would suggest a massive difference. However they face each other at either end of that long tunnel which constitutes the development of the then newly hatched industrial man (the so called conqueror of nature's resources) into nuclear enslaved man. Mishima looks back over the ghosts of Radiguet, Nietzche, Napoleon and Goya to de Sade and the last vestiges of rebellious man's futile efforts to resist the grand tyranny of nature's monstrous cruelty.

Pasolini dealt with the ultimate outcome of de Sade's volition in his "Salo, 120 Days of Sodom." The obvious end was to be the eradication of all. Sade was very much a product of his century, a particular epoch which restored the deity of nature to the throne vacated by the Christian god of Europe. De Sade's work was very much against the general flow of the age which produced the pantheistic writings of Rousseau and Diderot and the elysian bowers of Fragonard and Boucher. Sade's stance and philosophy were very vehemently anti-nature. The sadistic ideal is to destroy the product/fecundity of the creator by destroying the creation itself thus putting oneself on a level with the creator and equalling (therefore negating) nature's tyranny.

To encounter Mishima is to come up against cultural and sexual confusion laced with myriad contradictions. His autobiography exposes him as the illegitimate progeny of European literature, fathered by de Sade and nurtured on the Samurai ethic. Rejecting western capitalism, drawn to all things American, profoundly narcissistic whilst attacking the preening of his Japanese contemporaries (whom he misogynistically considered to be women). Worshipping the emperor as God whilst adoring the false gods of European art in the guise of Radiguet and Dostoyevsky. Masturbating over the Guido Reni St. Sebastian, fathering two children whilst actively attacking bisexuality in his writings. Writing prolifically whilst training his own private army. Exposing his own sadistic and exhibitionistic drives in his writings and eventually ritualistically disembowelling himself in homage to the emperor whom he felt he had failed by avoiding active service in world war two.

Mishima's sadistic tastes are more finely honed than those of de Sade. While de Sade's passions were given free rein and would seem to change as to the rising and abating of desiring whims, those of Mishima have a more austere disciplined meticulousness. In "Confessions of a Mask" he describes a fantasy in which the object of his desire is served very elaborately on a platter as the main course at a ceremonial dinner. Mishima carves away the breast of the boy in thin slices. He likens the chest to an "amber coloured shield" - there is always resistance and even though the boy, being unconscious, can no longer resist, the nature of the boy's chest itself offers resistance, a shield of resistance which must be pierced.

But Mishima's blood-lust was only temporarily satiated. Shooting arrows into the belly of young Roman gladiators he states: "The sacrificial victim must send up long, drawn out mournful, pathetic cries, making the hearer feel the unutterable loneliness of existence. The weapons of my imagination slaughtered many a Grecian soldier, many white slaves of Arabia, princes of savage tribes, hotel elevator-boys, waiters, young toughs, army officers, circus roustabouts." Sadism is primarily a numbers game. "If you increase numbers until they are no longer believable evil itself becomes a miracle." In aiming towards infinity Mishima was to attempt to lead the whole of the Japanese into a ritualistic suicide to atone for having failed the emperor. Mishima's sadism is a realm of systematic, rationalisd even idealised insanity. Somewhere Mishima crossed his blood-lust with the absolute ideal of the samurai and gave birth to a formidable philosophical and literary monster.

SURVIVE THE STREETS

Andreas Reda survives Self Defence

With sore muscles but feeling pleasantly tired, I recently left a one-day workshop on self defence in South London. This came at the end of a ten-week course of techniques of evading and countering physical attack in the street. Weekly practice and sensitive coaching left everybody with a feeling of increased confidence.

Peter Morey-Weale has been teaching his combination of Judo, Shinkido Karate and Aikido for five years now. He believes that his course has something special to offer to women: an opportunity to learn an effective form of self defence in a sympathetic atmosphere which they would not find in an average martial arts class. It's entirely non-competitive: 'I don't foster an element of competition in the class,' says Peter. 'People learn at their own level, with the more practised helping those who might be reluctant initially about physical and at times combative-feeling contact.' Towards the end of the course, as people lose their initial shyness about touch and stop apologising for throwing one another on the floor and as people learn to twist wrists expertly, the atmosphere takes on a wonderful, almost comradely feel of solidarity and togetherness - an important psychological advantage in the current climate.

In a real threatening situation the first step is to take the initiative away from the attacker. And in a serious attack you must leave your attacker incapacitated. Don't let him get up again. This kind of attitude might be difficult for some of us to take, but otherwise you have the option: Always consider running away first; avoid confrontation.

'The goal which I strive to achieve,' Peter says, 'is one or a series of movements which allow evasive and defensive action - this is essential. The aim is to stop bullies intimidating others for their sexuality, religion, race or politics.'

Does he have any personal experiences of physical attacks? 'I was attacked by a man with a knife when I was seventeen. We both came out of it damaged.'

Peter has had a cross-section of people, both women and men, attend his course. Their ages have ranged from 20 to 60 with varying degrees of physical fitness. He wants them to stand up for themselves as individuals, preferably as gay individuals, and he takes a close interest in people's progress.

'I'm terribly interested in newcomers,' he says. 'The greatest satisfaction comes from watching people coming out of themselves, gaining confidence and perhaps even coming to terms with themselves as gay people.' For Paul, one of the people attending the course, it proved to be just that.

Is self defence a political stand to take? Peter thinks it is. 'Tory ministers who want to close down gay pubs and clubs are just a reflection of current attitudes. It's a worrying thing if you get people making statements like that: it's an open invitation to people who are particularly ill-informed. It's a very real threat. It's a callous thing to say in public.'

The course is also fun and enjoyable - some people have been coming to it regularly for years. It's a very friendly group.

Peter Morey-Weale's new course starts in Battersea on January 14. For details and application form phone; (01) 857 5964
Peter will also be talking to the London Bisexual Group on January 13

POETRY

This is the place.
In the circle of trees I sit down.
It is early. I listen. It starts.
Moving down
Moving down to the centre
The dark
The lovely fearsome nourishing darkness
Down there
Into Her realm. Into Her space. Into Her time.
Down, down to infinity.
Deeper, deeper into the dark realm
All the way, nothing held back, here I go.
And then She comes
And then She is there
I feel the thrill touching my heart
Opening it up, filling it to bursting, singing into it
My heart, Her heart now, singing, wide open, all full
All full of Her
Her darkness, Her blood, Her power, Her changes,
Her force, Her awe, Her strength, Her depth,
Her infinite love, Her wisdom, Her ugliness/beauty
All filling me now.

John Rowan

I don't want you
I will not allow you to
penetrate my thoughts
I will not daydream your caress
I will not
I will not allow
Have you permanently become a
part of me
Is running away from you
running away from me
Do I rip my soul in two
when I try to escape your need
Is it my need too
Is it because the more you leave me
the more I leave me
Who are we
Who are we alone
Together
Lone

Stephanie Berger

Bisexual footballer seeks lymph nodes

PUTTING THE BOOT IN by Dan Kavanagh, Cape, 192pp, £8.95.
DUFFY (1982) and FIDDLE CITY (1983) by the same author, Granada, £1.50

Kavanagh continues studiously to debunk the glamour of private detection, as Duffy, the bisexual detective sleuthing around the seedier parts of 1980s London, is called upon to investigate some mysterious, disturbing goings on at a Third Division London football club, where the hamburger stands are right next to the gents' lavatories and the half time entertainment is a Cilla Black record.

It's a vivid seedy picture of the hopes, dreams and realities of life at the unglamourous end of football. Kavanagh maintains his strong anti-racist, anti-fascist stance, as Duffy investigates a neo-Nazi movement which has begun to operate from the terraces - just one of a chain of events which leads him to believe that someone is trying to destroy the club.

The theme of bisexuality is developed with Duffy being pounded with the often inevitable call to admit that he is really gay. 'Don't give me any of this bisexual shit. I've heard it all before. It's just a way of saying, Oh no, I'm not really - I'm not really that.... If you're not queer, then I'm Selfridges.' But Duffy maintains as ever that for him 'the difference between having a girl or a guy was the difference between bacon and egg and bacon and tomato.'

The language is very Minder, but a very liberated high-minded Minder with a caustically wicked humour and some very interesting observations on sexuality and the gay male scene.

Duffy has always been a worrier: he worries about getting old, getting fat, getting crumbs in the bed. Now, like a lot of us, he's very concerned about AIDS. Checking his skin for sarcomas. Watching his weight. Counting night sweats. Trying to find out where his lymph nodes are.

Kavanagh gives us an uncomplicated, witty, conversational explanation of the facts about AIDS. Tempering paranoia with hilarious exaggeration, Duffy articulates all the worst fears of bisexual and gay men. 'He wasn't going to any doctor, thankyou very much. He didn't want them getting out the leper's bell and packing him off to the Welsh Mountains.'

It is a stroke of near genius, in view of the style and marketing image of the books, and goes a long way towards a humanisation of the 'high-risk groups' and an explanation of why we are concerned.

All of the books are excellent, but it will be worth waiting for the inevitable cheap paperback version of PUTTING THE BOOT IN. Meanwhile read the others.
DAVID SMITH

Two times America

IT'S ME, EDDIE, by Edward Limonov, Picador, 272pp, £2.95

This is a fictional memoir of a Russian underground poet who defected to the West in the early seventies.

Eddie, a semi-autobiographical creation, is left by his Russian wife soon after moving to New York. She falls in love with the bourgeois American lifestyle, the drugs, her social life as a model and her many lovers, male and female.

Distraught at the end of their highly charged, erotic relationship, Eddie finds his place in the bohemia of New York. Angry at women both for Elena's leaving and because of his experiences of vagina envy ('a cunt is more perfect than a prick'), he spends much of his time on the traditional Russian hobby of excessive drinking and after a couple of false starts begins his first gay affair.

Mostly Eddie refers to male gay sex in terms of active and passive and sees his gay experiences in terms of being the woman, to him the passive partner. In that sense the book is out of date. Though one might wonder how advanced Russian gay politics is, or if it exists at all.

The novel offers an insight into the Russian mind and a fascinating account of the New York bohemian life. Eddie, a rebel in the Russian system, finds the West little more satisfactory. Though he finds a measure of relief in the decadence and some fulfilment in his bisexual adventures.
MATT MILNE

THE BOYS ON THE ROCK by John Fox, Abacus, 146pp, £1.95.

It is always refreshing to read an account of a young person growing up, because what it might lack in reflection it makes up for in directness. The story of Billy's adolescence in New York charms by its naturalness and innocence.

It's the summer of '68, the Vietnam war is on, LBJ is President and McCarthy is running for candidate. The whole story is written in an off-hand sort of tough-little-boy manner and takes place in the Bronx. They have dances and drive-in things. That sort of stuff. It's a very American story, written in American.

The story of Billy's growing up, defining himself, finding a place on the scale of sexual possibilities, meeting fellow travellers and adversaries on this journey, is told with sensitivity and insight, although when it comes to describing heterosexual feelings, it takes on a somewhat different emotional quality. But it's an uplifting little story, rather like some revolutionary art.
ANDREAS REDA

Radical Publishing

PUBLISHING FOR PEOPLE and fighting censorship, ed. by Bob Baker and Neil Harvey, London Labour Library, 176pp, p-b, £1.95.

The first socialist souvenir to come out of the recent Socialist Bookfair tackles what radical publishing is all about: breaking the frontiers of institutionalized censorship in this country where by an insidious process of small steps we have now reached a stage of self-censorship.

Ken Worpole presents the idea of the community bookshop having to respond to the competitive threat from the new up-market chains and leave its well worn tracks and concentrate on more aggressive marketing techniques and on active, cooperative sharing of resources with others after the demolition of the Metropolitain Counties and the grant aid they provided. In the end such a change would benefit not only the bookshops but also the publishers and of course the readers.

PUBLISHING FOR PEOPLE contains 20 poems from such as Dinah Livingstone and Alice Walker, excellent articles on all the current issues facing radical publishing (including the prosecution of GAY'S THE WORD bookshop) and in the 'pink pages' a directory of publishers, bookshops, magazines and allied services (all radical).
ANDREAS REDA

Important new research from the author of THE BISEXUAL OPTION

SEXUAL VARIABLES

BISEXUALITIES: THEORY AND RESEARCH: Number 11 of the Book Series, Research on Homosexuality, edited by Fritz Klein MD and Timothy J. Wolf PhD, Haworth Press, 255pp, £16.50 p-b, £24.00 h-b.

For years we have been bemoaning the lack of decent books about bisexuality. Well here at last is something new, interesting and comprehensive. Predictably it's from the States.

'The history of research into bisexuality until now could almost be characterised as non-existent. We have gathered the leading sex researchers of bisexuality to explore the various facets of, until now, a practically uncharted territory.' So says Fritz Klein, author of the 1978 book THE BISEXUAL OPTION one of the most readable and positive books on the subject.

One of his major contributions to this round-up of research is the presentation of the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid. In an attempt to demarcate and understand the complexities of human sexual attitudes, emotions and behaviour, the grid includes sexual attraction, sexual behaviour and fantasies, emotional and social preferences as well as self-identification and 'lifestyle'. Bisexuality is defined as 'a number of sexual and non-sexual variables.....in the broad spectrum between the exclusive orientations of the two "monosexualities".....' Other aspects of a definition are examined and there are several non-academic articles about the bisexual 'scene' in the US, together with a 12-page booklist - the most comprehensive I have come across.

A less academic book by Fritz Klein is in preparation, in the mean time ask your library to order this one. The publishers need to be made aware of a demand for books like this.

DAVID SMITH

The London Bisexual Group and Gay's The Word will have copies in 1986. BI-MONTHLY examines the contents of Klein's research in greater detail in the February issue.

David Smith reviews a history of the theory of sexuality

Vision of equality

SEXUALITY AND ITS DISCONTENTS: Meanings, Myths and Modern Sexualities, by Jeffrey Weeks, RKP, p-b, 315pp, £6.95.

Like the majority of lesbian and gay theorists and commentators, Jeffrey Weeks makes very few direct statements about bisexuality in itself, and yet COMING OUT, his history of homosexual politics, does reveal a great deal about how bisexuality came to be ignored and abhored to such a degree.

At the end of the nineteenth century Havelock Ellis (whose wife was a lesbian) was a pioneer observer of homosexuality, child-sexuality, masturbation, transvestism, fellatio and cunnilingus. His book SEXUAL INVERSION published in 1897 gave a boost to the self-awareness of homosexuals and its law-reforming spirit was influential right up to the 1960s.

However, despite the fact that working class people in his day were relatively tolerant, Ellis did not believe that he could win the day. In order to bolster up his call for tolerance and law-reform, he stuck rigidly to the idea that homosexuality was a 100% situation, natural, unavoidable and unchangeable. It could not be a partial state, It could not be acquired or learnt. Ellis had endless discussions and disagreements with Freud on this question.

The essence of Ellis' views prevailed in the 1950s and 1960s, the period leading up to the change in the law in 1967. An artificial distinction was still made between 'inversion' (real homosexuality) and 'perversion' - perverts being people like bisexuals who do it, 'even though they don't have to'.

Jeffrey Weeks recognises contradictions and illogicalities like this. In his new work, SEXUALITY AND ITS DISCONTENTS, he shows how our ideas of sexuality have been artificially constructed by theologians, biologists, psychologists and political theorists. Most recently threatening has been the rise of the New Right with its emphasis on traditional morality, the family and Victorian values - a perfect climate for the AIDS backlash.

The libertarian approach, often favoured by bisexuals, and backed up with reference to left Freudians, Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse, is rejected by Jeffrey Weeks. 'It speaks of a sexuality that has been denied, to the detriment of individual freedom and social health.' And yet 'the effect of this, as feminists have pointed out, can be to impose a view that sexual expression is not only pleasurable, but necessary - often at the expense of women.'

Nevertheless the approach which is suggested here embraces the vast spectrum of sexual choices to provide 'a vision of an alternative society in which exploitation and oppression can be tamed, in which a real equality and genuine self-determination for all can be achieved.'

Jeffrey Weeks admits that this is 'a distant prospect', but if the ghost of Havelock Ellis still walks today, perhaps Weeks' is a vision of society in another 100 years. Don't drop the bomb, Ron!

* * *

OTHER BOOKS TO LOOK OUT FOR:
EARTHLY PARADISE by Colette and THE COLLECTED STORIES OF COLETTE, both by Penguin.
TOWARDS DEMOCRACY by Edward Carpenter.
ADIEUX: A FAREWELL TO SARTRE by Simone de Beauvoir.
MOMENTS OF BEING by Virginia Woolf and THE LETTERS OF VITA SACKVILLE-WEST TO VIRGINIA WOOLF edited by Louise de Salvo and Mitchell A. Leaska.
RICHARD BURTON - a new biography.

Vulgar factions: FORUM'S dilemma

FORUM, Vol 18 nos 11&12 Nov/Dec 84
"Bubbling Bisexuality - another kind of mid-life crisis" & "Bisexuals in Conversation" by Roger Baker.

I remember reading an article on Bisexuality by Roger Baker in an early issue (No 47) of the old Gay News when I was searching around for some sort of identity for myself. Now here he is again in Forum ten years later. In the December issue he has also written an article about Rock Hudson and the continuing pressures on gay stars to remain secretive about their sexuality to all except those closest to them. It would be interesting to know whether there are any parallels between this and Roger's own position as a gay man who was himself editor of FORUM magazine from 1980 until the middle of 1985.

Both the articles about bisexuals look at the men who are the heterosexual side of 50/50%. These are the ones most likely to write to Forum about their problems, usually around 35, married, outwardly heterosexual, yet wanting sexual experiences with another man, but definitely no emotional involvement.

In the first article Roger Baker attempts to sort out some of the confusions suggesting that "for these men to describe their need for a homosexual encounter as 'bisexual longings' is convenient but misleading...it seems much more helpful to define ourselves, not by the varying urges of our genitals, but through our own chosen lifestyles."

He then goes on to suggest that these men could meet the sort of men they are looking for in local gay groups, but first they must be prepared to "step over that hard line between straight and gay."

I agree that becoming confident enough to be able to say "I am gay (or partly so)" is a significant step in the development of a strong self image for a bisexual person. I also look forward to the day when labels are not important at all. I would argue however that the bisexual label is vitally important whilst there is generally no awareness that the hetero- or homosexual labels may each embrace elements of the other.

The five interviews in the second article briefly but fascinatingly illustrate the very different levels of and ways of dealing with bisexual feelings in a narrow sample of men. If one imagines examining the same issues in a complete range of bisexual people the variety of choices and solutions is likely to be overwhelming.

Forum magazine (first published in 1968) has consistently contained evidence that bisexuality exists. With precious little other evidence around, that is one reason I've kept going back to it, although the emphasis on threesomes and couples is not particularly useful in increasing the understanding of bisexuality. When I looked along my bookshelves for back numbers I discovered that I'd habitually bought it about once a year, in July or August. On reflection there are three main reasons for this pattern:

1) I don't buy it more frequently because there's something about the magazine that makes me uneasy and except for some articles one issue is very much like another.

2) From academic interest and as an optimist, it's worth checking out occasionally to see if there have been any changes for the better.

3) I buy it in the summer because that's when I feel randiest and some of the stories and advertisements undoubtedly stimulate my particular fantasies (erotic rather than pornographic of course!).

The publishers of Forum believe that by reading about the sexual experiences and feelings of other people we reduce our ignorance, fear, and guilt about sex and increase our potential for joy and pleasure in our relationships. None of us is unique and sex is not dirty. So far so good. Why is it then that I'm not convinced it often achieves these laudable aims? Its principal ingredients are articles, readers problems, personal ads, readers sexploits (or fantasies?) and commercial advertising. Heterosexual bias and blatant sexism are disappointingly but increasingly evident as one runs through that list. Can porn be separated from erotica objectively? I must conclude that the market that the magazine reaches is light years away from being ready to practice the magazine's philosophy.

For a detailed analysis of Forum, proposing that the sexual revolution, far from bringing liberation and fulfilment, has actually upheld male power and reinforced women's subordination, I would recommend "The Sexuality Papers, male sexuality, and the social control of women" published in 1984 by Hutchinson in association with The Explorations in Feminism Collective.

Roger Baker will be talking to the London Bisexual Group at the Fallen Angel on Monday 20th January 1985.

DAVID BURKLE

Whacky Families!

CONFESSIONS OF A FAILED SOUTHERN LADY, by Florence King, Michael Joseph, £9.95.

If your passion is for wisecracking, sophisticated American humour of the Gore Vidal or Dottie Parker type, I'd recommend your sniffing out this under-publicised and under-reviewed little gem. CONFESSIONS is the autobio of Flo King, brought up during the grey and conventional '50s by a family of eccentrics - 'A maniac', she tells us, 'could hide in my family as a leaf could hide in a forest.'

Grandmother ('the last of the Great White Goddesses') is determined to mould Flo into a delicate Southern Belle, i.e. a snobbish hysteric, obsessed by menstruation and the menopause, while Florence's other great mentor is a butch mother who chews tobacco, keeps a baseball scrapbook and whose ideas of a good time is to sit through endless screenings of 'They Died With Their Boots On' complaining that there's too much kissing and not enough cavalry charges. Add the influence of Jensy, the black maid, who is obsessed with being a credit to her race and constantly berates 'trashy niggers', plus an intellectual English father who works in a dance band and it's little surprise that from an early age Flo has a mind of her own.

Considered 'a lady to her fingertips' by everyone around her, Flo gradually grows into a wonderful, well-adjusted steaming dyke, a Scarlett O'Hara who thirsts to wear herringbone; who shocks her prissy '50s schoolgirl friends by publicly confessing that she'd willingly bed Susan Hayward, and proceeds to join the women's navy; whose most torrid affair is with a bluestocking who gets horniest at the peak of her period; and who makes her living by writing true confession stories with titles like 'I committed Adultery in a Diabetic Coma'.

Throughout the book, which is peppered with movie references, tall stories, puns, upturned aphorisms and the occasional tear jerking episode, there is one message which constantly recurs: none of us can completely shake off the conditioning of our childhood. 'No matter which sex I went to bed with with', confesses Florence, 'I never smoked on the street.' I laughed a lot at this book.
Highly recommended.

by Kris Kirk

This review appeared originally in 'Gay Times'.

Ellen Weissbuch on Alice Walker's poetry

A few teardrops lighter

HORSES MAKE A LANDSCAPE LOOK MORE BEAUTIFUL, by Alice Walker, Women's Press, 79pp, £2.95.

> I am the woman
> offering two flowers
> whose roots
> are twin
> Justice and Hope
> Let us begin.
> (from REMEMBER)

Justice and hope are the major themes in Alice Walker's book of poetry, HORSES... This is her first volume of verse to be published in Britain. Three earlier collections are already available in the U.S. Here she is best known for her novels and essays.

The title and the epigrams in this book are taken from Native American writing. Alice Walker believes that African Americans and Native Americans, in addition to sharing the same cultural oppressor, have a common ancestral belief that 'everything is inhabited by the spirit' (IN SEARCH OF OUR MOTHER'S GARDENS).

The spirit she speaks of is not one prescriptive god, but the preciousness of all living things and life itself. Her poems concisely express her insistence on justice and hope in a world divided by gender, race and economics. There are many moving poems presenting her concern over political and environmental problems in the Americas and Africa.

> We alone can devalue gold
> by not caring
> if it falls or rises
> in the marketplace.
> Wherever there is gold
> there is a chain, you know,
> and if your chain
> is gold
> so much the worse
> for you.
>
> Feathers, shells
> and sea-shaped stones
> are all as rare.
>
> This could be our revolution;
> To love what is plentiful
> as much as
> what's scarce.
> (WE ALONE)

She is angered by all the injustice on Earth but is not bitter. Her love for family and friends and the beauties of nature makes her hopeful for the future.

> Surely the earth can be saved
> by all the people
> who insist
> on love.
> Surely the earth can be
> saved for us.
> (from THESE DAYS)

Alice Walker is a cult figure on the West Coast of the U.S. and especially in San Francisco where she now lives. There is even an engagement calendar with a quotation from Ms. Walker and a picture from her family album for every week.

HORSES...is a rare collection of poetry that discusses so many issues of concern for the human race, but leaves the reader feeling hopeful. And in the case of this reader, a few teardrops lighter.

ELLEN WEISSBUCH

Sue Winter looks at non-fiction books

Come on in, the water's lovely!

THE PRICE OF THE TICKET: Collected Non-Fiction 1948-1985, by James Baldwin. Michael Joseph, 690 pp, h-b, £14.95

Presupposing you have read at least one of James Baldwin's novels (GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN, GIOVANNI'S ROOM, ANOTHER COUNTRY) you will already know he writes with great passion; lamenting and raging in a soft, gentle, ironic fashion against the oppression of centuries.

This collection of non-fiction has all the fire of his novels; compelling reading like this, the opening of HERE BE DRAGONS....

"To be androgynous, 'Webster's' informs us, is to have both male and female characteristics. This means that there is a man in every woman and a woman in every man. Sometimes this is recognised only when the chips are, brutally, down - when there is no longer any way to avoid this recognition. But love between a man and a woman,or love between any two human beings, would not be possible did we not have available to us the spiritual resources of both sexes."

He moves mountains of foggy thought to reveal the sunrise clear and bright yet still manages to leave one feeling like some white middle class liberal.

THE DESCENT OF WOMAN, by Elaine Morgan, Souvenir, 288pp, p-b, £5.95.

Ms. Naked Ape! - God love her. I only hope this is all true. When I die I want to go to heaven and discover that it really did happen like this. Like what? Well you see, it all began with Eve and this apple, only there wasn't enough water and the apple tree shrivelled up and Ms. Naked Ape took to living on the beach like some 1950s bohemian; staying cool and learning how to become a homo sapiens. If you have ever wanted a rational explanation of the how of human beings this is it.

Wonderfully compassionate and witty. Everything in its place and a place for everything (and I don't just mean the chapter about the position of the vagina). I have never perceived of the male of the species as being "enemy" (he just isn't that powerful). Here Elaine Morgan puts into perspective the apparent anomalies between female and male. Sometimes balding, often impractical and certainly difficult to accomodate sexually (though it's no fault of their own) our male friends are invited to 'come on in, the water's lovely'. An invitation no one should refuse.

SURPASSING THE LOVE OF MEN: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present, by Lillian Faderman, Women's Press, 496 pp, p-b, £6.95.

Have you ever wondered if there were any gay women before we had the word gay. This history of women's relationships puts clearly into perspective how women's freedom to interact and on what level this interaction may take place has depended on social climate and the toleration, or lack of it, by men.

The change from "Romantic Friends" to Liberated Lesbians is set in an historical context (albeit one which relies heavily on literary references). Reading this book gave me a strong sense of lesbian identity and a personal insight into the nature of romantic friendship in general.

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London Film Festival

In June 1969 social unrest in the States was at its height. The police were cracking down. But when they raided the Stonewall - a low-life gay bar in Greenwich Village, which didn't have police or Mafia protection - the customers said enough is enough. Three days of rioting ensued and the Gay Liberation Movement was born.

BEFORE STONEWALL charts the social trends which affected the expression of gayness up until that time. As the film cuts from archive footage to interviews, we go from black/gay bars in Harlem in the 20s, to a 93% lesbian army unit during WWII, to the McCarthy hearings, to the early days of gay organizations as we know them today.

Director Greta Schiller uses period home movies (a lesbian wedding), clips from Hollywood films (a gay cowboy!) and an extract from a unique film of gays in Germany in the 30s. This was made by the pioneer researcher into homosexuality, Magnus Hirschfeld. All prints were thought to have been destroyed by the Nazis, but a copy turned up in the Ukraine.

I can't praise STONEWALL too highly. It's a fascinating document of our all-to-often censored history. It's worth seeing over and over again. It opens at the METRO in London at the end of January.

DESERT HEARTS is an hilarious weepie. Beautifully shot in the Nevada desert, it is peopled by strong women full of wisdom about the joy and pain of love. Vivien, at 35 a respected literary professor, leaves her husband in order to disentangle their lives. In Reno for a rest and a quick divorce, she meets Cay, casino cash-girl, artist and maniac driver, who is looking for someone that matters...

Backed by classic country and western, blues and rock'n'roll songs, the film grabs you by the throat and makes you feel every emotion played out on the screen. It's the most positive gay love story I've ever seen.

KISS OF THE SPIDERWOMAN brings together Luis Molina, a gay man imprisoned for eight years for "corrupting a minor", and Valentin, a radical journalist being tortured for information.

William Hurt gives a wonderfully observed rendition of a "queen" retreating into melodrama, as he passes the time by recounting a tragic love story - unconcerned that it is from a Nazi propaganda film. In contrast Raul Julia as Valentin is hard and unyielding, initially unable to accept that softness and emotion can be part of manliness too. Both learn a lot from each other as their daily lives and concerns become more and more interwoven. Highly recommended.

Also watch out for: COLONEL REDL, MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE, SHADEY, FORGET VENICE, THE ANGELIC CONVERSATION, and LETTER TO BREZHNEV. (DAVID SMITH)

KISS OF THE SPIDERWOMAN opens in January and DESERT HEARTS in April.

DYNASTY as Pantomime

If you abandoned DYNASTY when bisexual Stephen went straight, you ought to know now that our suspicions that it wouldn't last were right.

He has a dishy new boyfriend called Luke, who was also formerly married. Stephen loves Luke and still loves his own wife, Claudia too, but she doesn't understand and attempts to pressure him to decide between Luke and her.

Evil Adam, Stephen's long lost brother, capitalises on Claudia's distress and whisks her off to Mexico to get a divorce and to lure her to his own bed...But Steven still has custody of his son by his first wife whom Claudia loves as her own (the son that is) and Stephen's Dad, Blake, is backing Stephen all the way this time around, having earlier fought him for custody on the grounds that it was totally unacceptable for a child to be brought up by a gay parent. Blake lost the case. Now he insist Stephen invites Luke to dinner with all the family, a good intention but a most embarrassing occasion due to the obnoxious Adam's unchallenged, rabid heterosexist jibes (plenty of chance to hiss and boo here - our household really enjoys joining in the 'soaps' in the best pantomime tradition).

But seriously - will this gay relationship be allowed to flourish? There was one line: Let's go to bed' - but will we be allowed to see them there, displaying the same passion as all the heterosexuals are given the chance to display?

Watch out for BROTHERS, a new American situation comedy with strong gay characters starting on Nov 29 at 9pm. Channel 4 haven't decided whether to buy 50 more episodes after the first 13. Tell them you liked it. (DAVID BURKLE)

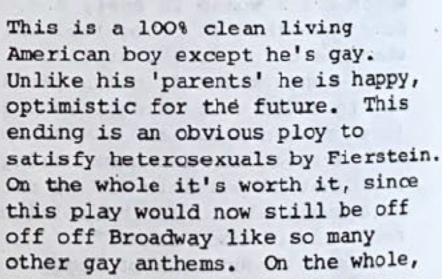
Torch Song Trilogy

This show has a very strong American feel about it with the leading character being a Mid Town New York drag artist, excellently played by Englishman Anthony Sher. The show starts with Sher in full drag and follows his struggle for M.M.G.R. (meaningful monogomous gay relationship). I suppose with A.I.D.S. tearing New York apart, people are turning towards monogomy to reduce the spread. More interestingly, the idea has great appeal to a heterosexual audience. This might explain 'Torch Song Trilogy' being a massive box office success for gays and straights alike in the States.

The story follows the leading character's gradual achievement of gaining 'a husband' and 'a son', though the 'husband' openly admits being Bisexual - hisses from the audience at this point (I'm joking). One scene played on a huge bed covering the whole stage, shows the classic interplay between drag artist 'hero','husband' with his het. wife. All very complicated, but things are these days.

In the end our hero gets his/her man and a domestic scene ensues with gay couple happily installed in flat. For me, the best part of the play takes place when our hero confronts the mother. The mother, played by Miriam Karlin, makes a formidable matriarchal attack on the now happy gay domestic scene. Some brilliantly played emotion by Sher (autobiographical I wonder?) against the mother produced real tension which froze the gay audience.

Reaching a kind of conclusion, the play presents us with a very positive result of the gay couple.



Anthony Sher here seen in SHADEY.

This is a 100% clean living American boy except he's gay. Unlike his 'parents' he is happy, optimistic for the future. This ending is an obvious ploy to satisfy heterosexuals by Fierstein. On the whole it's worth it, since this play would now still be off off off Broadway like so many other gay anthems. On the whole, I liked this 4 hour play except, when you see it, always remember this is America. (R. O'CONNOR)

GOSSIP

BOY GEORGE has been coming out as bisexual all over the place. On telly in the U.S. and most recently on the TV EYE documentary about AIDS. He swirled into a building and was launched immediately into the interview. It's a pity he didn't get a script writer - someone who knows the facts and knows what needs to be said. His own thoughts were mostly confused...... In the last issue we announced the 80th birthday of EMLYN WILLIAMS, actor and playwright. We stated that he was happily married. Unfortunately his wife died in 1970. Our apologies!.....LEAVE ALL FAIR is a new film about New Zealand writer, KATHERINE MANSFIELD, and her husband, John Middleton Murry. Born in 1888 Ms Mansfield described herself as a lesbian. The film stars JANE BIRKIN and centres on Murry's manipulation of his wife's image after her death, and it hasn't pleased Murry's daughter. Writing to THE OBSERVER, she says: 'If Katherine Mansfield must be upheld in the feminist cause, so be it. But if this stance has to be defended with distasteful innuendos and half truths laced with downright falsehoods then the feminist ranks must have some deserters. It is totally unacceptable that my father's absolute integrity and unstinting loyalty should be put forward as the mercenary exploitations of her talents by a ridiculous male nonentity.'.....Our roving U.S. reporter recently met one Les Abram of ARETE (The Bisexual Centre of Southern California). Started in 1978 this group meets in people's homes and about 50 attend twice monthly social outings and 'rap sessions'..... JIM HERRICK of GAY SWITCHBOARD recently spoke to the LBG, reminding everyone that their policy is that all volunteers should be gay-identified, so that they can say to callers with absolute confidence: Yes! I am gay! Challenged on the question of anti-bisexual bias he agreed that gayness is anything that is not the heterosexual norm.....Young star performer and choreographer of contemporary dance, MARC MORRIS, wowed and disturbed some of the audiences at the recent DANCE UMBRELLA festival in London with his androgyne bisexual images.....At their recent conference volunteers of FRIEND, the gay and bisexual befriending and counselling organisation, said that they would be very willing to help anyone set up a bisexual group. And HULL LESBIAN LINE have been in touch with LBG to encourage bisexual women to phone. .....and finally a gem from Oscar Wilde: Morality is a word that people use when they see others they don't like, having fun.

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Two viewpoints

You've made a more than reasonable attempt to include something for everyone. However, the general ethos is one of a magazine penned by political activists with the emphasis on the intellectual. I picture a group of social workers, teachers, local government officers and solicitors as having been the prime movers behind this issue. The flavour is not likely to appeal to anyone who did not go to a university college. In short 'up-market' and 'not much for ordinary muckers at street level. The poetry page is an island and has one contribution that stands out for me - that of Ellen Weissbuch - she owes nothing to Keats and has the guts to keep it simple and I admire her for that.

Yours,
Nigel Cooper, London.

I only stumbled across a copy of BI-MONTHLY yesterday, I wish I had known of its existence earlier. It is heartening to know that other people share your insecurities and to be able to see them in print. Keep up the good work.

Yours,
Andrew Canham, London.

Letters and comments on all aspects of BI-MONTHLY are warmly welcomed. Please keep them as short as possible and send them to BI-MONTHLY, BM BI, LONDON WC1N 3XX

BIRTHDAYS

Jan 8	David Bowie (1947)
Jan 19	Janis Joplin (1943)
Jan 22	Lord Byron (1788)
Jan 25	Somerset Maugham (1874) Virginia Woolf (1892)
Jan 28	Colette (1873)

OUT OF BOUNDS

'WELL, I think it's too absurd for words," announced the new girl, looking about her defiantly, "the boys haven't all got infectious diseases, have they?"

LONDON BISEXUAL GROUP DIARY

The LONDON BISEXUAL GROUP meets at The FALLEN ANGEL, 65, Graham Street, N1 at 8.00 for 8.30pm every Monday. The nearest tube is ANGEL.

DECEMBER

Monday 16 CHRISTMAS PARTY - FANCY DRESS. Come as you please, come as your fantasy, come as you really are.
Monday 23 No formal meeting, but everyone spending Christmas in London welcome to come along to the pub and 'party'.
Monday 30 As Monday 23

JANUARY

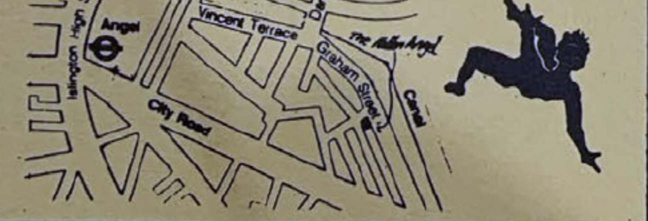
Monday 6 KRIS KIRK, gay journalist and author of MEN IN FROCKS and a soon to be published book on lesbians and gays in pop music.
Monday 13 SURVIVE THE STREETS - SELF DEFENCE. Talk and video by Peter Morey-Weale.
Monday 20 ROGER BAKER, editor of FORUM magazine from 1980 to 1985, will talk about 'FORUM and Bisexuality'.
Monday 27 What is the LBG doing apart from organising meetings at the Fallen Angel? What should it do?

FEBRUARY

Monday 3 Prof. BOB PERKS talks about Humanism.

Monday 10 PETER TATCHELL talks about Defence. What are the advantages of a non-nuclear, democratic army?

THE FALLEN ANGEL HOW TO GET THERE



Backlash

DAVID SMITH

'Close down the gay pubs and clubs to stop AIDS.' This is a call from Geoffrey Dickens, Tory MP for Littleborough and Saddleworth, who claims to be the spokesperson for a group of like-minded people in Parliament including some prominent politicians. 'It would be wrong of me at this stage to reveal who they are,' he says. 'Let me just say that there are one or two very influential people who think like me.' And similar homophobic rantings are to be heard from so-called comedian, Bernard Manning.

I don't know whether to be more incensed by the message or by the fact that Independent Radio News broadcast it without any reaction from the gay community to balance the idea, even though they had recorded comments from the Terrence Higgins Trust the previous day.

I myself was asked to record a protest after registering a strong complaint in the name of BI-MONTHLY and the London Bisexual Group.

The pubs and clubs of the gay community are the only places where open, honest, accurate and explicit information is available about AIDS and Safe Sex - the only real hope we have of controlling this virus. The gay pubs and clubs are the only places where people can talk about AIDS without creating panic and hysteria. The gay pubs and clubs are the only places which are raising money for the Terrence Higgins Trust which continues to lead the way in informing gay and bisexual men and their partners about the reality of this disease.

This issue is dominated by AIDS. We make no apology. AIDS is not just a disease. It is being used as an excuse for a backlash. This magazine owes a debt to a gay pub and a gay club (The Fallen Angel and Heaven) which have provided meeting space to the London Bisexual Group free of charge, thus allowing the group to pay for the magazine's production. The people this group represents will defend the gay community to the end.

In June 1969 gay people fought police for three days after a raid on the Stonewall bar in New York. Since then gay communities all over the world have struggled against great odds to establish places to meet and be together. They are not something that will be given up lightly.

We will not be forced back into the closet. We will not be forced back into the the parks and cottages. We will not give up our right to meet. We will not be pushed back underground.

Geoffrey Dickens should come clean and say who his mysterious supporters are. And meanwhile a few more of the scores of gay and bisexual MPs should stand up and tell him what we think about his suggestion.

At the same time they could voice some of our very serious objections to the new Public Order Bill which the Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, hopes to have on the statute-book by next summer.

Under the cloak of doing something about football violence, the government wants to introduce stringent new powers to control marches, assemblies, pickets and static demonstrations involving more than three people. A new offence of disorderly conduct is to be introduced. The police will have powers to arrest anyone whose language or behaviour is likely to cause 'harassment, alarm or distress.' Police evidence alone will be sufficient to obtain a conviction and there will be no recourse to trial by jury. This new offence provides the police with the perfect means to gain easy convictions at the expense of vulnerable and harassed minorities and anyone engaged in protest.

Geoffrey Dickens could have his way if the police begin to use the new offence to arrest gay and bisexual people outside pubs and clubs.